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**SERMON CXXV.**

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**DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.**

MATT. v. 14, 15, 16. *Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

This passage of Scripture implies that there is a difference between Christians and other men. It is a radical and permanent distinction as regards their principles of action. My object is to show that this difference *will manifest itself in the life*. This I shall endeavor to do by showing,

I. That this difference *will be developed*; and

II. By inquiring what there is in the circumstances of the Christian adapted to *bring out* his principles.

The first point is that the principles of Christian piety will be *in fact* developed in the life. By this I mean, that he who is truly a Christian in his heart, will be in his life; that his conduct will be not merely that of a professor, or a moral man, or an amiable and estimable member of his family and the community; but that he will be a *religious man*; that you may know *where to find him* on any subject pertaining to the kingdom of Christ. Now that this will be the case, it does not require many words to prove. For

1. *The nature of the change is such that it cannot but develop itself.* Regeneration effects no direct revolution in the intellect, but it does in the heart; none in the essential stamina of the mind, but it does in the principles of action, and in the volitions, desires, and preferences of the man. Nor is it a slight change. It is so great as to make it proper to apply to it the terms new creation, new birth, and life from the dead. There is no other change in the human mind like it—none so deep, so thorough, so abiding. This is so clear in the Bible as to need no further proof. Now the proper place to manifest such a change is in the life, and such a change if it exist *will be* manifest there. Neither the nature of mind nor of religion, will, or can, prevent it. Important revolutions in a man's principles on any subject we expect will be exhibited there. Nor have we any evidence that they have occurred until we witness them in a man's deportment.

But the change in a man's religious views and feelings in regeneration, is one that affects him not in any one department of life, but in all. It is not a revo-

lution whose effects we expect simply in the church, or in the family; in the external conduct, or in the abandonment of vices; but in all the appropriate circumstances of the man's life. If a revolution like that exist, it will be seen. It will constitute him a new man in Christ Jesus.

2. The same thing is clear from the declaration of the text. It is not, *ye ought* to be the light of the world, but *ye are*; not that Christians *should be* like a city set on a hill, but an affirmation that *they are* such. Though exhortations are addressed to Christians in the New Testament urging them to a life of faith, yet they are also addressed as actually putting forth the principles of piety, and as true to their God and Savior. *Ye* who were some time darkness *are light* in the Lord. Believing, *ye rejoice* with joy unspeakable and full of glory, *receiving* the end of your faith, the salvation of your soul. I thank my God, says Paul to the Romans, that your faith *is spoken of* throughout the whole world. None of us *liveth* to himself, and none *dieth* to himself. It is unnecessary to multiply passages. All know that the New Testament abounds in expressions declaring the matter of fact that the gospel *has* an ascendancy in the minds of its friends. Nor would it be necessary to advert to this circumstance were it not that so many Christians are in the habit of regarding the Bible rather as filled with *exhortations and commands*, which they are not *expected* to comply with, than with sober statements of what the gospel actually does accomplish among men. The truth is, God contemplated that the gospel *should* have effect; and such *was*, in sober verity, the early effect of the gospel, that Paul could address *any church* as actually manifesting the mighty change wrought by the spirit of God. *Ye are* our epistle, said he to the church at Corinth, the living, standing proof at once of the power of the gospel, and of the effect of his ministry. *We* have fallen on different times. The language addressed to churches is not, *ye are*, but *ye ought* to be, the consistent followers of the Lord Jesus. O when shall we be free from that miserable theology which only chills, and paralyzes, and freezes; that false philosophy which fetters the soul, and binds the energies of the children of God; and that spirit of slumber which compels the ministry, if they would speak the truth to their people, to say, *ye ought* to be the devoted followers of Christ, and which seals our mouth when we *would* say, *ye are* living monuments of the power and grace of God.

Let not refuge be attempted here in the plea that the people whom Paul addressed *had been* heathen, and that therefore the change would be more manifest, and this sort of appeal would be more proper. True, they had been heathen; and the change was a proof which no infidel has met *yet*, that the gospel was from God. But the ground of the address to the primitive Christians was not what they *had been*, so much as what they *then were*. Besides, is it reserved for us to meet a remark like this, that a people nursed in heathenism, but yesterday degraded to the level of the brute, and sunk in every species of abomination, were to be addressed as actually *in advance* in Christian principles of the people of *our* times, and trained from their earliest years in the great principles of the Christian religion? Are we to expect more living demonstrations of the power of piety from the recovered population of Athens, Corinth, and Rome, than from the people of these times; more of its ceaseless energy and heavenly influence on the population of Caffraria, and the Sandwich Islands, and Burnah or Hindoostan, than in the churches of this land? No, my Christian brethren, the gospel contemplates it as a matter of *sober fact* that we can appeal to you and to all Christians and say, *ye are*—not *ye ought* to be—the light of the world. We can address the language of obligation and of duty to the most degraded population on the globe; we can approach the profligate, and the profane, and the pagan, with the language, *ye ought* to be humble followers of God. We can approach true Christians with the language of certainty, and say, *ye are* the

salt of the earth; ye are the light of the world. Nor is any man a Christian who cannot be addressed in that language.

3. The same thing is clear if we look at the instances which are mentioned in the New Testament. In the case of Christ it is beyond the possibility of doubt. Nor is it unfair to adduce him as a case in which the principles of religion were developed. True, he had no unholy propensity, and needed no change. But his principles were put to the test—and to a test unequalled in the life of man. On one occasion such was the pressure of circumstances, such his intense anxiety, and such the magnitude of the great inquiry, that he said, Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? Shall I say, Father, save me from this hour—this impending calamity—this terrific, sad, and painful death? Shall I abandon this work; yield in the conflict; and pray to God to save me from approaching woes? His own decision is well known. Father, glorify thy name. Let calamity come; let me suffer; let me die; but honor thou thy name. Scarcely less clear was the case of the apostles. Who could doubt what were the principles of Paul? And yet Paul at conversion might have pleaded what would be pleaded by thousands of professors as the reason why their religious principles are obscured. It was not that he had no prospect of honor and ease and affluence that he became so decided a Christian. The path to fame and wealth was open before him. O how much persecution, and poverty, and contempt, and danger, might he have avoided by a little of that regard to ease and affluence which thousands bearing the same honored name of Christian manifest! How easy for him also to have sunk the Christian in securing the honors of office, the friendship and applause of mankind. But Paul judged differently. So of Peter, of John, of Moses, of Daniel, of Ezra, of Elijah, of John the Baptist. See Abraham, leaving the land of his fathers at the command of God; see Moses despising the splendors of royalty; see Daniel encompassed with danger and death; see the martyrs, witnesses for God while the flame encompassed the body, or their sinews were torn by the rack; see the Son of God, always the friend of his Father, always showing what he was; and you have an illustration of what the Christian principle is, and is intended to be.

4. There is no principle in the universe that can be brought to bear on the mind with such weight as the religion of the gospel. There is nothing that can develop the principles of man if it be not the gospel. And yet we know it is easy by far inferior tests to find out a man's character. Horace Walpole long since remarked, that every man has his price. A man whose predominant passion is avarice can be corrupted. A small sum may not do it, but you may multiply the temptation till his principles shall come out. Thus, it was not a trifling bribe that could move Lord Bacon. But he might be bought, and it was done. One form of pleasure or one degree of vice may not corrupt a man, but another will. So the natural principles of the heart may be brought out. Your father languishes on a bed of death. His dying sufferings will recall you from the place of folly or business, to minister to his wants; or in other words, the principles of filial affection will overcome those which are leading you to vice.—Your country bleeds. It will test your patriotism. Its great sufferings may overcome the love of the fireside, and you may welcome the toils of the camp, and the perils of the field. The sufferings of your country have brought you out, and shown what you are. But none of these motives test the character like the religion of Christ. God, by that plan, designed to effect what no other plan could do. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be manifested in us. Law, philosophy, morals, had failed to restrain and reform men. But the gospel has been effect-

ual. In millions of cases men have been changed, redeemed, purified, saved. So that it has become an established matter in God's government that the gospel *is* powerful enough to overcome all the tendencies of sin. It will unclench the hands of the stoutest avarice; silence the profaneness of the boldest blasphemer; make pure the most corrupt heart; and stay the strides of the most haughty. There is not a grasp on gold, or pleasure which the gospel has not the power to break. And there is not a sinner who, if he fairly comes under its dominion, will not become a holy man. Your strongest propensities it may subdue. Your proudest systems of morality it may destroy; and your most gigantic schemes of corruption it may demolish in the dust—for thousands of such sinners as you are it *has* humbled, prostrated, changed into holy men. Nor persecutor is secure that he can accomplish his scheme before he shall be arrested by it. The band sent to arrest the Savior were awed, humbled, convinced by his eloquence, and returned, saying, Never man spake like this man. Paul was arrested in his mad career, despite his malice, and his commission. Now can it be that this mighty gospel that is appalled by no towering crime; that cowers before no propensities; that fears no titles, no splendor, and no renown; that prostrates haughty man as easily as does the tempest the proudest oak or cedar of Lebanon; that can enter any circle of corruption, and shed the peace of Eden around the habitation of the profane, and the scoffer, and the drunkard; that carries its principles into the profoundest minds, and sheds its humility into the proudest hearts, is it possible that it can exist, and not be manifest? Can it do all this, and no one know it? Can it live and act thus, and never be developed? Then may the light rest on the mountain top and the vale, and no one see it. Then may the city lift its turrets to the clouds, and be invisible. Then may the winds of heaven prostrate the pride of the forest, or the habitations of men, and no one know it; and then may the ocean swell, and pour its surges on the shore, and no one be aware of commotion. It must, it will stand out in the view of man. If it accomplishes such changes, they will be seen, and if it ever grasps any human spirit, it *must* show its power in the life. We are prepared to remark,

II. *That the world is fitted to develop the principles of men, and eminently those of the Christian.*

The plan of God in his moral government is to test the character; nor are any rewards conferred until the character is ascertained. The whole arrangement of his moral government is such as to show what man is, and such as to make the sentence of the day of judgment *be seen* to be just. Men are suffered to become learned, to see whether they are disposed to employ their learning for the welfare of the universe. They are suffered to accumulate wealth, that the native propensities of the heart may be brought out. Objects of fame, of ambition, of pleasure pass before the mind. It is not that God may *know*, but that a fair trial may be made. *Before* that trial shall be made, a sentence of condemnation would *appear* to be unequal. *When* man has been fairly tried, when virtue and vice, heaven and hell, honor and dishonor have been fairly brought before him, it is right that God should address him, and say to him, Bear that character with you to eternity.

Again. The organization of the world is adapted to develop the character of the hypocrite. Were true religion less decisive and less powerful, it would be more difficult to determine on the character. But religion is designed to produce a thorough change in all the man. It becomes then a matter comparatively easy to determine the character of those whom the Savior describes as neither cold nor hot—those that have a standing among the professed people of God, and yet in works deny him. In a world like this, and in a community organized as the Christian church is, man never need mistake his own character. It is not the



fault of God if men are deceived. So decisive is the gospel that it must, and will, produce the effect of testing the man. He that is not with me, said the Savior, is against me. Look at any instance of a hypocrite in the church, and there *will* occur occasions when his character shall be fully tried, and when it shall be seen whether he is willing to surrender the world for the sake of the gospel. Judas must find an occasion to manifest his avarice, and sunder the slender and feeble bond by which he was united professedly to the Savior. It was done, and he fell. He *had his price*; and such was the paramount ascendancy of the love of gold in his heart, that for thirty pieces of silver—a price at which religion has been often sold—he was willing the Lord of glory should die. Achan must find an occasion in which his prevailing principle should be tested. The occasion arrived, and for a wedge of gold, and a goodly Babylonish garment, he exposed the camp of Israel to the vengeance of God. In the case of Ananias and Sapphira, the same principle was again to be developed—and their lives paid the forfeit of the accursed love of gold in the church.

It is not this withering passion alone that will be tested by the gospel. It is adapted to try the hypocrite in all his subterfuges, in all his mental reservations; in all his evasions to escape the simple and decided duties of Christian piety. Every demand of truth or duty brings his character out. The doctrines of the gospel disturb or disgust him. Those solemn and awful, and yet tender truths, which go beyond the coldest moral sentiments, and which speak of the just government of God, of sovereignty, of election, of hell, of holiness, and prayer, trouble him. Those expressions of pure and advanced piety which speak of the higher joys of the Christian, and tell of communion with God, disquiet him. Those sentiments which speak of active piety, which call on him for decided zeal in the cause of God, irritate him. Those assaults which religion makes on his corrupt feelings, those reproofs which she administers when he conforms to the world, those denunciations which thunder along his path when he lives *just like other men*, and is ashamed of the religion which he professes to love, provoke him. His mind is ruffled by the demands of a life of sincere and prayerful piety. And hence Job asks, respecting the hypocrite, "Will he always call upon God?" The movements of piety enrage him. Efforts made to advance the religion of Christ find no response in his bosom, and meet only sour, cold, and repulsive feeling. A revival of religion is a phenomenon in which he has no interest—which is neither the object of his solicitude nor prayer. The great movements of Christian benevolence excite no kindred emotion in his soul. Efforts or wealth in that cause are deemed by him a *dead loss*. He has no tears to shed over suffering and sinful man. Now every time the gospel is offered to such a man in any of its forms, it tests the character. As if God would not suffer him to go to hell without knowing what he is; as if he would meet him at every corner; test him in all the departments of his soul; and throw himself in the way of the sinful and wretched man; he has varied the tests of the man's character, so that he cannot *but* know what manner of spirit he is of. By searching and uncompromising doctrines; by truths repulsive to the native heart; by demands on his piety and his prayers occurring every hour, in his family, in his professional life, in his intercourse with man, in the great designs of Christian benevolence, he meets the man everywhere, and gives him an opportunity to determine whether he will serve God or mammon. One thing is clear. Whoever goes down to wo murmuring at the justice of God, or complaining that there was no opportunity to test the character, it will not be the man deceived in a Christian church. Whatever the pagan, or the Jew, or the Mussulman may do, it is clear, that no man goes from the bosom of the church of God to the judgment of condemnation without having his character fairly brought out, and fully seen in the eye of the universe. When year after year passes by, and the man still retains his place

at the communion table, and *will* not be a Christian; and when having gone through ten thousand trials where he had an opportunity to show that he was a pious man and did not, no blame will be by him attached to God if he dies thus, and his home be made with other hypocrites and unbelievers; and the wonder is, that in these circumstances man *will* retain such a place in the church of God, and subject himself to all the goadings of a guilty conscience, and the irritations of truth, and the corrosions of remorse, and the consciousness of inconsistency for the poor and paltry benefits that result from professed adhesion to the people of God. The hypocrite will go to eternity thoroughly tested; and as God manifestly intends that his condemnation shall be monumental and admonitory with a disastrous pre-eminence, even in hell, so he has taken care that the case shall be fairly brought out, and that the wretched man shall have full opportunity to escape the terrific pangs of the second death.

Again. The organization of the world is such as to bring out the character of the sincere Christian, and one grand point of God's moral government was so to shape the economy of human things as to open the finest field for its display. Religion starts into life principles of action that are ultimately to have the ascendancy in the soul. It calls up dormant powers—awakes new energies—urges to conflict with the powers of darkness—and bids man grapple with invisible and most mighty foes. Let any Christian contemplate for one moment the situation in which he is placed, and then let him ask, whether this organization does not contemplate the fact that his piety will be developed. What is religion? It contemplates the subjugation of his native propensities; the overcoming of his evil passions; the purification of a corrupt heart; the discipline of a vain, and wayward, and rebellious mind. It demands that chastened and serious feeling should take the place of frivolity; prayer, that of thoughtlessness; the love of God, that of the love of fashion; and delight in the scenes of devotion, the place of delight in the scenes of amusement and vanity. Can these exist, and not be manifest? And is it not the very nature of godliness that it should stamp itself in the life in letters indelible and legible by all men?

See the condition of the church of God. What *may* be in better times—in those brighter periods of the world to which human affairs, under the gospel, are tending—we know not; but hitherto, and even now, there is just enough of opposition among men to all that is pure, and meek, and humble to make it indispensable that there be a line distinctly drawn between the friends and the foes of God. Christians have been a little band—a remnant amid the tribes of men. They, spiritually alive, move among the dead. They tread a world in possession of the enemies of God. They are the healthy among the sick—the sane among the insane—the sober among the gay—the pure among the dissolute—the living among the tombs. Their very presence is a rebuke on human pursuits; their views a reprobation of the opinions of others; their lives a living remembrancer of the folly and crimes of men. Now there is not a single principle of your religion, that is peculiar to it, which the men of the world do not at heart *hate*; and in relation to which they will not manifest their hatred in appropriate times and ways. In proof of this I need only refer you to your own native feelings respecting the piety of the gospel. I could point you to the opposition to the *same* principles in the life and death of your great Master and Redeemer. And I could point you to a thousand fires of persecution lighted up in the darkness of past generations, shedding their beams on times of profound night, and on skies of thickened clouds, fires lighting the steps of one generation to another—to the gardens of Nero, to the vallies in Piedmont, and to the flames of Smithfield. I could point you to thousands of dungeons dark and dismal, where holy men have drawn out their lives, illustrating the estimate in which their piety is held by the men of this world. But it is not needful. I affirm that

there is opposition enough in any age to *test* your character and show what you are. It may meet you in the family, and the eye of a father shall reprove you for being a Christian; or the tongue of a brother shall deride you for your serious piety. It may meet you in the circle of friends, and the voice of professed affection shall speak of you as gloomy and superstitious for your humble and conscientious regard for God. It may meet you in public and political life, and subject the soul to a daily and constant test whether there is strength of piety sufficient to *avow* the despised doctrines and precepts of the cross, and to make them the governing principle of the life. They who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution; and one design of persecution is to *develop* the strength of the Christian principle.

There are *allurements* enough to try the Christian principle, and to show to the believer what he is. A corrupt and giddy world is around him testing his character. Places of amusement open their doors. The sound of the viol, the harp, and the organ invite you. Nay, deeper and still more damning places of guilt often are presented to the Christian. The theatre, the places of abomination where God is derided and virtue defied, and ridiculed, and cursed, dare to invite even a friend of God. And all such allurements try the character: they ascertain whether you have strength of Christian principle to resist the sin when it is presented in alluring forms, and maintain your integrity when the voice of the syren invites you. So the path of ambition is opened before a man to see whether he will consent to *sink* the Christian character for the sake of office; whether he can climb the steps of fame with Christian simplicity of character; or whether he prefers the vale of humble piety, content with the esteem of men and the unalloyed hopes of heaven. So the business, the enterprise, the gains of commerce are presented to the view. The splendors of wealth allure; the ports of the world are open for successful commerce; wealth glitters in the eye, and it invites you to toil and enterprise. That you should refuse to devote yourself to industry, and make full proof of commercial skill will not be maintained. But who would dare to maintain that here was no signal and eminent trial of the Christian spirit?

Again. There is enough of *affliction* in the world to try the Christian. Nor is there one of us who, in the course of our lives, shall not have full opportunity to show what we are in times of trial, bereavement, and wo. God designs that there the Christian principle shall triumph; that it shall be fully equal to all the pains that we may be called to endure. He *varies* those afflictions to bring us fully and fairly out. Now he takes away our health, to see how we will bear protracted disease; now he removes our property, to see how we will bear the loss of an idol; now he cuts down the child of our hopes, and tries whether we will be still and know that he is God; and now he opens before our own view approaching death, to try whether we have confidence enough *in him* to commit our departing spirits to the guidance of his unseen hand. In all these scenes it is designed that our piety should shine forth with a benign and pure effulgence—brightening like the beams of the morning, and burning with intenser rays like the sun as it ascends above the clouds, or looks forth from the tempest to ride the meridian sky.

God has placed us in a world eminently adapted to call forth the peculiar principles of the Christian; and in a world too, where, if those principles are *not* called forth, it is full proof that they do not exist. See a race of sufferers; a world of mourners; entire tribes of sinners. Christians, you hold in your hands that gospel which will send peace around the globe—that glorious gospel of the blessed God that may enlighten all nations, alleviate every sorrow, comfort every mourner, and change the aspect of every kingdom and tribe of men. Nor can you be inactive, or undecided on this subject. Every time this great

question is presented to you, in whatever form, it calls on you to act. Every plan of benevolence that is submitted to you affords an opportunity to *test* your character, and will actually *develop* that character. And as if God would present to his people the *highest* possible inducements to devote themselves to the good of men, he has placed before them an entire world of sufferers and sinners, that they may make *full* proof of their Christian principle. As if he would excite them in the highest manner, he has foretold brighter days of the church, and assured us that times are advancing that shall correspond with the deepest desires of the people of God. And as if he would set his seal to the expression of Christian feeling in regard to the pagan world, he has followed the efforts of his people with a signal blessing. Now it was precisely this state of things that called forth the burning ardor of Paul. Nay, more, it was the view of the deep guilt and woes of suffering man that moved the Son of God with compassion, and led to the self-denial of his ministry, and the agonies of the garden and the cross. I need not add, that if the woes and dangers of man found their way to the bosom of God's own Son, it is not to be wondered at that they should find their way also to all who are his followers. Can a man be a Christian whose bosom *does not* respond in this to the feelings of the Lord Jesus? If I have read the oracles of religion aright, he cannot.

Once more. Every Christian is placed amid domestic scenes and circles of friendship that will bring out his character. You have a child unrenewed. That child will soon stand at the bar of God. Nay, that child shall tread the deep profound of the eternal world, and live for ever. Need we put to a Christian parent, to excite his interest, the question whether that child shall live for ever in heaven or in hell? There is a feeling in a *Christian* bosom that anticipates this question, and there is much in the situation of that child to bring the Christian out and develop his character. You have a parent who has watched over your infancy, and been always kind; but that parent is not a Christian. Can there be any thing among mortal men so fitted to call forth deep feeling in the youthful Christian bosom as the sight of the parent's venerable locks, and the feeling that that parent is going unrenewed to the bar of God? You are a brother, or a sister, or a friend. The leaden, slow-moving ages of eternity are before your unconverted friends; and what in all the universe is better fitted than this to call forth all the Christian within you to humble and holy effort to save those friends from the deep shades of eternal night? You are members of a Christian church. Does it slumber? Have the shades of a heavy night fallen on our eyelids? Are there hundreds who have no professed interest in all that the Redeemer has done to save them? Are they unrenewed, unpardoned,—what is, alas! most deeply melancholy—unconcerned, and unalarmed? They go to eternity, and they appeal to the Christian to put forth all his efforts to save them from death. You live in an age when your influence in the cause of revivals and Christian benevolence may be felt around the globe. The utmost pagan tribe; the blackest, foulest cell of guilt, and filth, and wo; the darkest dungeon of depravity on pagan soils *may* be reached by your benefactions. A revival of religion in any church, such as existed in the day of Pentecost, *might* be felt in its influence in all this land, and in every land. The development of your Christian principles, my fellow-members of the church, is what the world demands, and what the Savior who died asks of you. If his death will not do it, there are no motives in the universe that will. There is no other blood; there are no other groans; there can be no more such dying agonies.



## SERMON CXXVI.

BY ALBERT BARNES.

### REASONS WHY THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER SHOULD BE DEVELOPED.

MATT. v. 14, 15, 16.—*Ye are the light of the world, &c.*

In my former discourse I endeavored to prove that the Christian character *will be developed* in all cases where there is piety in the heart; that it is not merely a matter of obligation that the piety of Christians should be manifest, but it is a matter of sober truth that where it exists it *will be* manifest; and that the world is admirably adapted to bring out the character of man; to show what the sinner is, what the hypocrite is, and what the Christian is, and where he may be found. In the prosecution of the same subject I wish now to furnish an answer to one single question, *Why should the Christian character be made manifest, or be developed?*

Our Savior has given us the answer in the text. It is for two objects: two objects which blend themselves together, and result in the same thing,—*first*, that our good works *may be seen*; and *second*, that *being seen*, they may lead others to embrace the same religion, and glorify God by a holy life.

I. My first argument is, that *religion is of no value unless it is brought out, v and made manifest to the world*. What is the use of light if it be hid under a bushel? What the value of parental affection unless it is brought out, so as to benefit your children? What the use of friendship, if your friend can never calculate on your aid in times of necessity? What would be the value of patriotism, if your country could not depend on you in times of danger? What is the value of the skill of a physician, unless the sick can calculate on his willingness to impart aid? What is the value of rich golden ore unless it be recovered from the earth, and turned to a circulating medium, and be made the means of comfort or of benevolence?

Just so it is with religion. What is the value of a *profession* of religion, where there is no living, humble, devoted piety? Of just as much value as would be the expression of parental tenderness while the parent would see his child languish with disease, and not seek relief; or sick or in prison, and not come to him; or as would be the piteous moanings of friendship, when your professed friend would see you pine in want, or incarcerated for a debt which he could easily discharge, and not lift a finger to aid you; or as would have been the professions of Washington about liberty and love of country if he had sought repose in the shades of Mount Vernon, or of Robert Morris had he hoarded his gold, and seen an army famished and naked, bleed and die without aid. What is the common value of a profession of religion where there is manifestly nothing more? What but to bring a reproach on the cause which can never be wiped away; to put an argument into the mouth of scoffers, which we can never meet; to parry all the appeals which we make to the consciences of sinners, and to hang heavy weights on the chariot-wheels of the great Redeemer!

That there will be *concealment* of principles in heaven—any diffident, and retiring piety where man can take refuge for want of decision, in the plea of unostentatiousness,—and where the assumption of modesty may be pleaded in

bar of the command to be seen and known as the friend of God, no man can pretend. Christ will cease, says Paul, to be admired in *all them that believe*; and they that be wise, says Daniel, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever; and then, says the Savior, shall the righteous *shine forth* as the sun in the kingdom of my Father.

II. The Christian should manifest his character, because *he lives for nothing else*. When a man is converted to God, he is prepared that moment for heaven;—that is, he has passed through the great revolution of moral feeling which will henceforward distinguish him from the wicked; and if he then dies, God will receive him to rest. It becomes then a most interesting question, *why* does God continue his stay on the earth? Why does he ordain that he shall still be doomed to live in a world of sin—to encounter contempt, and persecution, and poverty, and temptation, and lingering disease? Were an angel of bliss arrested in heaven, and commanded to descend to our scenes of calamity and want and woe—to be the tenant of a human body, and the object of the ribaldry and scorn of the world, it would be a case for which he would expect that some reason could be rendered. Now, whatever *might* be the conjectures of such a pure spirit in regard to the design for which he should live on the earth, they would *not* be the following. He would *not* conclude, 1st. That his business here was to become rich, and to lay his riches by in some useless deposit. God values gold too little to redeem *a man*, or to employ *an angel*, for the sole purpose of accumulating it. The shedding of the Savior's blood and the influences of the Holy Spirit had some other design than to brighten the faculties of man for successful purposes of gain. He who could make the mines of Potosi, or the gold of Ophir, or the diamonds of Golconda as easily as he could the coarse granite, needs no such waste of means to bring accumulated property into the universe. Nor, 2d. would it be, that he might sit down in ease, and recline on a bed of down, for the sole purpose of enjoyment. This is manifestly *not* the world for such repose; nor was it a part of the promises, that this should be the allotment of the Christian.

Enough of our race are influenced solely by a regard to wealth, and pleasure, and fame. Enough under the influence of native feeling, tread the paths of ambition, and cross oceans and hills in pursuit of gold. Enough crowd the places of amusement; lie down in the lap of luxurious enjoyment, and walk in the ways of pride and vanity. To this number of melancholy magnitude, it is *not* well that there should be added the name of the Christian. In this whole revolted world, it is well to believe that there are *some* who are influenced by other motives, and live for other ends.

But if the Christian lives for none of these things, what is the object for which he is continued on earth? I answer, that it is, first, that his character may be developed—that the principles of the man may be brought out—that it may be seen and known what he is. It is to show the signal triumphs of the grace of God, in overcoming the deep-laid native propensities of the man; in subduing wild and evil passions amid objects fitted to excite; in breaking his hold on the world, when ten thousand allurements are around; and in unclenching the hand of avarice; smoothing the brow of care; stilling the whisperings of envy; opening the heart of selfishness; and chaining down a wayward imagination to a sober, humble view of the realities of this, and the world to come. This is manifestly the design of religion as presented in the New Testament. And where this does *not* exist, we say that there religion has no power—that it makes no distinction between its professed friends, and other men. The second design of our continuance here is, that the evidence of our religion may so shine

as that others may be benefited by our living. For no man liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself. That this is the design of the Christian's living is clear from the example of Christ and the apostles. They believed that the Christian life *might* be turned to great practical account. They gave themselves to the great enterprise of saving a dying world; and the world felt that they *did live*, and Satan's empire through all its hosts gave signs of woe that all was lost. The Christian now lives for this. The salvation of men excites a deep interest in his bosom. It is an object for which he will pray, and toil, and deny himself. I say not that it is an object for which he *ought* to feel, but it is one which he *does* feel. It is a part of the man—the thing by which he is known—which constitutes his *individuality*—and by which he will be estimated at the judgment-seat of God.

III. The Christian character should be developed, because *there is no reason for its concealment*. The Christian, so far as he is a Christian, has nothing which he desires to hide from the notice of any being, created or uncreated. This is clear from the New Testament. He that is ashamed of me and of my words before men, said the Son of God, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed before his Father and the holy angels. And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, cannot be my disciple. The life of Christ shows also that this was the grand principle on which *he* acted. He affected no disguise. He concealed no sentiments. His views of sinners he advanced with the utmost fearlessness. His judgment respecting hypocrites he proclaimed in their presence, at the hazard of his life. His doctrines he advanced alike amid the rich and the poor, at Jerusalem, and on the hills of Galilee. He felt deeply at the condition of dying sinners, and the impending calamities of Jerusalem; and the dignified and exalted Son of God was not ashamed to be seen weeping over the doom of the devoted city. How many Christians on the earth are there now who would feel themselves degraded to be seen weeping at the prospect of the impending damnation of sinners? How much persecution would *he* have saved by a prudent reserve, by concealing his tears, by a time-serving policy, by a studied *trimming* between the service of God and the world. How peaceful might have been his life in the hills of Galilee, if he had advanced no sentiments but such as fell in with the previous views of the people!—So judged also the apostle Paul. He felt for the condition of a dying world, and he was not ashamed to have his feelings known. He felt for the condition of men deceived in the church, and he was not ashamed to say, "I tell you *even weeping* that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction." Nor was he held back by any views of prudence and ease, from letting it be felt to the ends of the world that he believed men to be in danger, and was resolved that they should *know* his feelings at any expense of time, or toil, or pain, or blood.

Now religion affects no concealment. It has nothing to disguise. The sun, the moon, the stars, the heavens have nothing to conceal—nor has the Christian. There is not a sentiment in the Bible, nor a duty, which he wishes or is willing to conceal. There is not a doctrine, however repulsive, that he does not wish should be known, and which he is not willing by any feasible or proper way to make known. The whole operations of religion are above-board. We have no mysteries—and religion keeps back nothing from the Christian. It does not permit us to doubt that there is a hell, and that the wicked are descending there—and the Christian is willing that you should know that he thinks so. Christianity frowns on your foolish pleasures, your gayety, and fashions, and frivolity; your theatres, and places of revelry, and the Christian is not ashamed that you should know *he thinks so*. Christianity regards every

man as by nature the enemy of God, needing renovation, and in danger of eternal wo, and the Christian hides not this opinion. Christianity seeks the destruction of your schemes of wickedness; the humbling of the heart of pride; the annihilation of your plans of grandeur and ambition. It seeks an entire change in the feelings, thoughts, purposes, deeds, and destiny of the wicked, and is willing that you should know that this is its aim.

Now are these things which we are to conceal? Are we to shut the great truths of our redemption from the view? Or, what is the same thing, are we to live *as though* these were not true—are we to conceal in our bosoms that living and active principle which separates us from others, and leave the impression on them that we esteem them safe, and that we have no belief of their danger? Are we to make all the arrangements of our livings—order all the circumstances of our families—array our persons with as splendid attire, and be as gay, and giddy and thoughtless as though we were just like others—living for the same ends, and putting forth no effort for their salvation? Who is it that practises concealment? The wretch who has some plan of evil. The man who wishes to insinuate himself into your favor to obtain by fraud your gold. The infidel, the drunkard, the gambler, who is aiming at your money or your principles. The seducer, who would undermine your virtue. He who would betray your confidence—who uses oily and smooth, and cunning flattery to ruin you—who overlooks your faults; commends your foibles; praises your beauty, your skill, or your learning; professes profound admiration of your accomplishments, to make you a prey to his selfish designs.—And shall the Christian be ranked with such men? Is *he* a man who believes a thing in his heart, and attempts to *pass off* a different opinion in his life? Is he a man whose characteristic it is that he wishes to convince you that he still loves the world—that he feels no interest in the salvation of man—who strives to imitate the gay, to associate with the great rather than the pious, to cultivate the society of the rich, rather than those who fear God? You have the hope of heaven. Is that a hope which it is your aim to conceal? You feel that you are a sinner. Are you ashamed that this feeling should be known? Are you unwilling that it should be known that you pray, or fear God; or can deny yourself for the cause of benevolence? Are you undistinguished from your fellow-men, except at the communion table? Then there centres all your religion. And under the plea that religion is modest and unobtrusive, that it seeks retirement, how many *appear* just like the men of the world—lay plans just like the men of the world—aspire to office just like the men of the world—live, feel, act, just like the men of the world—deny themselves as little, lay plans of gain as greedily, are as much moved at losses, and as little known in places of prayer, and in their closets, turn as coolly away from plans of benevolence, grasp their gold as tightly, and use their influence as reluctantly, as the men who profess to be influenced only by a regard to this world. When religion retires thus, the world may well ask, what is its value?—Nor can we find a ready answer.

IV. The Christian should manifest his religion for the sake of *the power of his example over other men.*

There is nothing in this world that has so much power over a man as the gospel; and there is nothing that will so affect the mind of a sinner—so try *him*, and bring *him out*, as a life of active and decided piety on the part of a Christian. But in order that this may be seen, it is proper to advert to a singular abuse of one of the loveliest traits of the Savior's life among his professed friends. The Savior was modest, was retiring, was unostentatious. He sought the shades of private life, and rebuked noise and display. He frowned on open and public proclamation of our piety, our prayers, and our alms. All this is



very true. But it is perfectly easy to see how a man who *does nothing*, and who *intends* to do nothing, may make a cloak of this for his indolence. The Savior's life was retiring—so is indolence. His maxims were unostentatious—so is inactivity. His prayers were unseen—so is the neglect of prayer. He gave his life in an unostentatious way to the service of mankind. So the man who does nothing, who lives like other men, who is undecided and unknown as a Christian—so does he sink out of view, and repose in obscurity. The Savior frowned on pride, and parade, and noise. So it is easy for any one to denounce ostentation—to regard deep feelings as parade, and expanded benevolence as ostentation and display. And yet it is not a strange thing if the whole character of the Savior should be mistaken. On pride he did frown, but not on *manifested* humility. On ostentation he did frown, but it was the ostentation of the Pharisee. On improper zeal in error and delusion he did frown, and so he did on those who were neither cold nor hot. On proclamation of our doings he did frown—and so he did on those who had nothing to proclaim, and who lived like other men. Now what is the thing that the Son of God meant to reach in all this? It was a false and hypocritical exhibition of what we do not possess. It was show of what was not deep-felt in the soul. It was that which the *hypocrite* always manifests—display of what he feels not—profession of that which is not believed: and this is the same as a profession of religion at the communion table, when there is none elsewhere; and public deference to its outward forms, when the whole life is like that of other men. But never—no, never, in his whole ministry, did he lip a syllable against its being seen, and felt, and known, where we are to be found, and against the proper and public manifestation of a life of decided piety. His whole life was just such an exhibition. The zeal of thine house, saith he, hath eaten me up; and his professions at the bar of Pilate; his unshrinking fidelity even in view of death; and his last pangs on the cross, showed where he was to be found.

Here we may make another remark. It is that religion supposes something *in advance* of other men. The world has come up to a certain elevation, and says it will honor religion if it will remain stationary at this level. If it will reprove few of its vices, and those of grosser form; if it will leave undisturbed its more refined pleasures; if it will not rebuke its gayety, and fashion, and pride; if it will be found at the same festive board, and suppress its peculiarities: if it will covenant that the peace of the sinner shall not be disturbed; and the great designs of God's benevolence be not pressed on the attention of men, it will speak smoothly of religion and its friends. Thus a covenant is easily made with death, and a league with hell. There is a truce in the warfare, and the world yields just as much as the church yields, and any decided movement in behalf of perishing sinners is regarded as a breach of compact, or an invasion of right. Religion, thus peaceful and still—thus undecided and unobtrusive, is the praise of every sinner's lips. It is eminently, in his view, the religion of peace, and it has reconciled the world unto itself. There is no emotion, no opposition, no conflict; there is no irritation, no movement, no feeling. The world is willing that the church should secure all the triumphs it can, for it disturbs no man's peace, disquiets no man's conscience, breaks in upon no man's vices or pleasures. It is willing even that men should become united to the church of God; for it implies no self-denial, no abandonment of pleasure, no *obligation* to do any thing to save man or to benefit the world. There is *peace*. But there is peace like this also elsewhere. There was peace, and unity, and concord, in the lonely valley which Ezekiel trod, which was full of bones, very many and very dry. There is peace like this in the hollow tombs, in the charnel-house of the dead—where no lip moves to reprove the living, no eye is fired with indignation at the sins of man, no one

of the still and solemn people there lifts a finger to warn the gay and the foolish that they are going to hell. There is a union there which nothing disturbs, and which is never broken, except when one and another is laid, solemn and still, and noiseless, in the vaults of the dead—as hypocrites still dead in sin become attached to a slumbering church.

Now it is not a religion or a peace like this of which I speak when I say, that Christianity has power over men, and that the Christian should let his light shine that he may do good. I speak of that only which is *in advance* of other men—which is open and decided. There is no development of Christianity when you go just as far as the *world will speak well of you, and then stop*. Wo, said the Savior to his disciples, “wo unto you when all men shall speak well of you, for so did they to the false prophets.” An ancient Grecian orator was accustomed to say, “what foolish thing have I uttered that the people applaud me?” A Christian may well begin to fear when all are loud in his praise. The Christian minister should seek his closet when his praise is on the lips of the gay, and foolish, and wicked, and when he has said nothing to disturb their peace. Our account is laid *in exciting feeling*, and better is *any* emotion than the still, prolonged slumbers of the dead; better any note than the everlasting and dreary silence of the tombs. So thought the Savior. He came for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that should be spoken against, that thereby the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed. And he finished his work. He was *in advance* of his age. He had new views, new plans, new projects, new endeavors. Never had Scribe, or Pharisee, or Priest, dreamed that the peace of Judea was to be disturbed by a religion so pure, so humble, so bold, so spiritual. Never had the great and lordly ruler supposed that one who was rich, yet for the sake of others could become poor, that he might make many rich. Never had it occurred to a Jewish teacher that any one could be bold enough to declare, or to risk his reputation on the declaration, that they who have riches should with difficulty enter into the kingdom of God; or to represent a rich man as calling in vain in hell for a drop of water from a poor beggar to cool his tongue. Never had they dreamed that there was to be a religion that was to move all the people—break in upon the dull monotony of the synagogue, or overthrow the tables of the money-changers in the temple—that was to produce *excitement*, and inquiry, and alarm—that was to lead thousands in a day to cry with deep solicitude, Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved? Yet he showed *what and where he was*. No one mistook him; nor was the proudest man or the richest man ever at a loss to see that Jesus Christ was actuated by some principle prodigiously *in advance* of other men. And his power was felt. His name was known. His words *stung* in the hearts of his hearers, and his preaching vibrated long in the ears of the goaded and irritated Pharisee.

So religion, if it be any thing, is always in advance of the world. It has a train of measures that are to be *felt*. It holds up a set of doctrines that are to tell on the soul. It has no concealment. It aims at the renovation of the entire world; and it seeks to apprise you that it is on this embassy, and that it has nothing *but this* to do in the world. But for its designs on your pride and plans, your hearts and lives, your follies and your wealth, it might to-day take its flight to its native heavens, and leave the world to perish *as it is*. But it seeks that its principles may be known. And it *supposes* that its most humbling doctrines, its most repulsive measures, its most stern features, should be held up by Christians themselves *in advance* of their fellow men. So Jesus stood before the Sanhedrim; so Paul stood before Felix; so Peter sought the imperial city; and so John, and James, and Matthew went among the nations of the earth, not modestly to *conceal*, but to *make known* the unsearchable riches of Christ. And so there is

no Christian—there *can be* none; it is one of the axioms, the elementary truths, the first principles of Christianity, that there can be none who will conceal his sentiments—that he that is ashamed of Christ and his words before men, of him will the Son of man be ashamed, when he comes in the clouds, with the glory of his Father and the holy angels.

Now, when we ask what is the proper effect of a life of decided piety, or *why* the Savior supposed that letting our light shine would have such an effect on men, the answer is at hand. For, 1. It shows what men are. It shows to sinners that they *differ* from others—that they are neglecting their salvation and going down to wo. An object may be totally deformed, or odious, and in the darkness of midnight it will strike no one. Pour on it a flood of day, and it will be seen. A sinner will be calm and thoughtless so long as he supposes he is as good as others. Live so that he may be reproved by your life. Let your conduct be a rebuke of his; your benevolence, a reproof of his avarice; your prayers, of his thoughtlessness; your seriousness, of his gayety; and your heavenly-mindedness, of his sensuality; and he will feel it. 2. The life of a Christian is an argument of the truth of Christianity, which he will see and know. We may preach in this matter, and no man will feel it. The world is full of books proving that religion is true, but who reads them? We can pile demonstration on demonstration, but they are cold abstractions, and all our demonstrations will be overturned in their practical effects by one cold and cutting remark of an infidel world: "See how your Christians live. See them just as gay as I *wish* to be. See them as thoughtless as I *desire* to be. See them just as inactive as I have any inclination to be. See them as fond of the world, as greedy of gain, as ambitious, as sumptuous in their style of dress and living, as I *desire* to be. See them do as little for the conversion of sinners and the spread of the gospel as I do. Such a religion, with all your demonstrations, is worth little; and it cannot be of much moment whether I follow the inclinations of my heart *within or without* the pale of the Christian church." But there is another side to this picture. The remarks of the infidel have not reached the *Christian* yet. There *is* an argument which infidelity must feel, and before which guilt will tremble. It is when Christianity reforms the sinner; silences the profane; reclaims the drunkard, the gay, and the worldly. The argument of such a life will be felt when our tomes of cold demonstration shall lie forgotten on our shelves. But what is this argument? It is this. That Christianity changes the man. That the change is seen in all his life. It is not that he is simply a *professor* of religion. That is *no* change. It is not that he is *periodically* religious, like the return of a quartan ague; or *prudentially* religious, at distant intervals; or a pious man, like the visits of angels, few and far between. It is that you know where to find him—that he is uniform, steady, like the light of a morning unbroken by mists, or the beams of a noonday unobscured by clouds and tempests. You know the power which a man has, who, in perils of field and flood—on the cold ground and in the cannon's mouth—serves his country. You know how different this from that frothy periodical patriotism which declaims on its beauty, and then sinks on a bed of down; which is eloquent with the praise of valor, and then is seen no more. So much difference is there between the example of him *in the church* who serves God, and him *in the church* who serves him not. 3. The world understands what religion is. They *know* that it is more than a name, a bugbear, or a shadow. And hence they scoff at professors, and deride our pretences of piety. Now the only way to silence the world, is to do it by your life. Argument will not do it. But a life of religion *will*. It will do more. It will not only *silence*, it will *subdue*. It will not merely close the mouth, it will find its way to the heart. The world knows that the conduct of Christ was different from that of other men. And they under-

stand that when professed Christians do not live like him, they are *not* Christians, and they are not slow in expressing their convictions—*NOR SHOULD THEY* *BE*. They are in the right of it *there*, and once at least sinners shall find me defending the correctness of their conclusions, and endeavoring to carry forward their demonstrations. 4. There is nothing so well fitted to convert men as a Christian life. God blesses such a life. He follows it with the influences of his grace. See a Christian self-denied. See him abandon every thing which is *not* Christian. See him lay aside the emblems of pride, of gayety, of luxury. See him unambitious of honors. See him the friend of the poor, of the widow. See him live in an atmosphere of prayer; breathe forth the aspirations of devotion; turn aside from the allurements of the world. See him lay himself and all he has on the altars of God. See him the patron of those great designs that look to the conversion of all mankind. See the iron bands which fetter other men fall around him; the ice of selfishness and avarice dissolve. See his great wealth freely given, and that which calls forth all the energies of the men of this world—that for which *they* live, see it all yield in his heart and life to the influence of some mightier principle. See the gospel in his soul have such an ascendancy that it humbles his pride, subdues his feelings, unclenches his hands from gold and office, and makes him a large and liberal benefactor of mankind. Who doubts that Howard was under the influence of some such principle? Who doubts it of Wilberforce? of Martin? of Edwards? No man doubts it any more than *I* doubt that he who has never done one of these things is *not* a Christian. See the gospel shed its peace in affliction, silence murmurs, restrain passion, sustain the sinking soul, and bear it up in the agonies of death. Who doubts that there is something in religion then? No man doubts it: and no man doubts that where none of these things exist, there is nothing in his religion. It is name, emptiness, vanity, imposition that deceives no one; profession that no one mistakes; pretension that never beguiles; a cloak that conceals nothing; an assumption which every man understands, and which every man, and which God, despises and abhors. The Savior understood all this, and felt more deeply than *I* do, or than *I* can express, that no good would be done unless the light of his people shine so that others should see their good works and glorify their heavenly Father.

V. A fifth reason for this is, that God will in this way be honored. A mere profession does *not* honor him. A life of inactivity does not honor him. The most staid and formal regularity, where there is no Christian life, does not honor him, any more than the solemn corpse of the dead laid in state is an honor to living men. The Christian honors God; the sun does that by *his* light, the moon and the stars of heaven by *theirs*; so does he by *his* light. The hills, the trees, the streams, the flowers, the ocean honor God. The Christian does it more than all. One word spoke *them* all into being. But your piety cost the labors, the long agonies, the groans of God's only Son. One word may turn them all to nothing, but your piety shall show forth his praise for ever and for ever.